



STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP – OVERVIEW

Advisory Group's Roles and Responsibilities

The Springfield Rail Improvements Project Stakeholder Advisory Group is a critical component of the project's public participation program. Participants will help the project team obtain valuable community input; identify and address local concerns; and build public interest and involvement in the project's activities. In short, advisory group participants serve as liaisons between the communities they represent and the project team, deepening team members' understanding of community conditions and values so that their actions are well informed and responsive to community needs.

Advisory group members have several responsibilities, which include: 1) reviewing important technical findings and offering feedback; 2) providing guidance on public information and engagement efforts; and 3) serving as program ambassadors to their constituents, colleagues and the community at-large. With the advisory group's assistance and support, the project team will maintain open lines of communication with the community at-large and establish meaningful relationships with interested and impacted publics.

Project Team's Role in Supporting the Advisory Group

The project team is responsible for providing technical assistance and administrative support to the advisory group. Such support includes:

- Helping members to understand existing rail corridor conditions, corridor changes to accommodate rail relocation, and the associated costs and benefits of these changes;
- Supplying the necessary information for advisory group discussions by developing agendas, meeting content and collateral materials;
- Creating a meeting environment in which members' range of opinions can be raised, discussed and thoughtfully considered;
- Reviewing input from advisory group members and demonstrating how this input will be incorporated into the project; and
- Responding to advisory group recommendations through reports back to its members.

An often overlooked but critical component of maintaining a successful advisory group is the provision of appropriate administrative support. This involves:

- Coordinating the meeting logistics;
- Sending meeting materials to advisory group members;
- Facilitating the advisory group meetings; and
- Developing and disseminating permanent records of meeting minutes.

Meeting Rules & Expectations

To ensure that advisory group meetings are highly productive exchanges of knowledge, insights and ideas, members will:

- Arrive prepared and complete the agreed upon agenda;
- Share the available speaking time;
- Avoid side discussions when others are speaking;
- Be respectful of differences of opinion and when possible, strive for consensus;
- Voice concerns and complaints inside meetings rather than outside of them;
- Ask questions to get clarity on meeting content, activities and follow-ups; and
- Put cell phones on silent.

Group Structure and Meetings

The Stakeholder Advisory Group is a standalone committee and will not be divided into sub-committees unless they are needed to improve the group's productivity. At present, however, the advisory group does not need to be subdivided and given its size, most work can be completed during a two-hour time period.

The advisory group will meet as needed throughout the project planning and design process. Meetings will likely occur after work hours to maximize participation in the process. Light snacks will be provided at every meeting.

Meeting Materials

The project team will provide meeting materials at each advisory group meeting. Initial documents will include project background information as well as contact information for the study team. At each session, additional materials will be disseminated, including but not limited to meeting agendas, handouts and summaries; and relevant technical and project information.